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ABSTRACT

This case study of the organizational structure of the Brazilian Literacy Movement (MOBRAL) describes the various organizational changes made as the mediating agency attempted to develop a large-scale national program within the existing social structure. Steps in the organization's development are traced from: (1) Beginnings in 1970 under the country's Ministry of Education and Culture as a flexible, decentralized national system with coordinators in the country's 22 states, through (2) some consolidation of structure in the central office to better manage the widespread activities, to (3) successful working operation at the end of the third year with five million students enrolled in classes in all of Brazil's 3,953 municipalities. Conclusions are drawn regarding the relative advantages and disadvantages of closed and open organizational systems with respect to the flexibility built into the MOBRAL structure. Brief comments are also included on MOBRAL as a model of organization and management for other institutions. Various charts depict the MOBRAL structure at national, state, and municipal levels. (JT)

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Workshop
Organization and Management
in Adult Education
Lamartine Pereira da Costa

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case study of the mobral system

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The case study of the Brazilian Literacy Movement - (MOBRAL) as an organizational system refers essentially to the descriptive analysis of a mediating agency's development in the social structure with mass-scale programs.

Having attained an uncommon operational rhythm and scale not only in terms of people involved (6,000,000 approximately in the total number of programs for 1974) but also in terms of geographic area (encompassing the 3953 municipalities and occupying 8.5 million square kilometers), MOBRAL constitutes, by the results obtained and its own characteristics, a true laboratory in the field of Organizational Theory and Administration.

The stage of MOBRAL's activities is extremely complex and differentiated. Brazil is a country of great physical and social contrasts. Depending on the time of year, the climate varies - from equatorial in the Amazon region to occasional snowfalls in the South. The population is ethnically diversified - its background is European (mainly Portuguese, Italian, German, Spanish) as well as African and Japanese, though integrated by the same language (Portuguese) and rapidly becoming miscegenated.

Brazil now ranks tenth in the world, in terms of population growth - with 100 million inhabitants - and with a Gross National Product of US$ 80 billion in 1974. Though commonly considered a developing nation, Brazil has only enjoyed an important economic growth during the present century, attaining exceptional growth rates in the last years (an average of 10% between 1968 and 1974).

Opposing these extraordinary internal transformations, we find historical social problems of great magnitude such as illiteracy, malnutrition, precarious sanitary conditions, income concentration and regional unbalances.

Some quantitative data give significance to the proportions and rhythm of alterations of the Brazilian social structure: urban population rose from 32,000,000 in 1960 to 53 million in 1970 with an expected 80 million for 1980. The number of students enrolled in primary schools in 1960 was 7.5 million and in 1972 it was 14.5 million. At high school level, the numbers are 1.1 million for 1960 and 5.3 million for 1972. At university levels the numbers of students enrolled rose from 100 thousand in 1960 to 1 million in 1974.

The following table offers an insight to the dramatic proportions with reference to illiteracy rates, which is our

main focus of interest:

YEAR	Population of 15 years of age and older	Illiterates of 15 years of age and older	Percentage
1940	23.639.769	13.279.899	56%
1950	30.249.223	15.272.432	50%
1960	40.187.590	15.815.903	39%
1970	54.338.606	17.936.887	33%

SOURCE: Demographic Census - FIBGE

Evidently, one of the principal problems of the Brazilian social structure not only from the government's point of view, but from that of public opinion, is that illiteracy has historically been considered the bottleneck of national development.

The Brazilian Literacy Movement (MOBRAL) began its activities in September of 1970 and represents the government's initiative to face the problem. For this, a portion of the income from the Sports Lottery (also founded in this year) and a percentage of income tax from companies, were granted to the new Agency which was conferred the corporate status of "Foundation" linked to the Ministry of Education and Culture, in order that it might have greater flexibility and autonomy of action.

To this availability of funds was added a pragmatic position as to the operation of the recently established entity. Government legislation was drawn up simply and succinctly, permitting ample maneuverability within the general objective of eradicating illiteracy and the continued education for adults.

It was also decided to give priority for the immediate initiation of the project to the illiterate urban population - given its easy accessibility and the impact of possible short-

term results - as well as seeking to concentrate efforts in the 15- to 35-year age group for reasons of higher profitability.

Operational difficulties relative to the coverage of the entire national territory were foreseen so a decentralized system of "communities" was sought. In other words, "municipal committees" were set up as the basic unit of the movement, which were voluntarily and patriotically in charge of the recruitment of illiterates and mobilization of the financial, human and physical resources of the community nuclei.

A vast publicity campaign was launched simultaneously with a political action of direct contact with State governors and municipal authorities, with the purpose of persuading the communities to participate actively with MOBRAL through institutional instruments of operation and rapid promotion.

An outline of structural or "federal" decentralization was achieved by means of coordinators for the movement working in the country's 22 states, 4 territories and Federal District (Brasília).

From an organizational point of view, the beginning of MOBRAL's activities was characterized as a "campaign" - that is an organization with minimum and essential formalities, with a high degree of flexibility in initiative and speedy answers to external questions. Structurally, MOBRAL's Central Office was constituted by an adaptable and simple administration nucleus capable of providing rapid "feedback" for achieving its objectives, with few bureaucratic limitations. In the states, the coordinators acted in a similar manner, concentrating their efforts almost entirely toward implementing the movement in the various municipalities.

The logistics - distribution of didactic material and salaries to professors (who are the only persons receiving salaries at a community level from MOBRAL) - were handed over to the editors of didactic material and to the Bank of Brazil respectively. The Bank of Brazil was chosen because it has the largest network in the country.

In an organization of a "campaign" type, it is obvious that improvisation will predominate: control was practically non-existent, financial resources were applied on the basis of specific cases, while achievement of the objectives prevailed. Feedback information which consisted basically of student attendance sheets, was not efficiently processed, nor did it result in a rationalization of decisions. Systematic oral

communication inhibited the use of norms and written records for a progressive rationalization of operations, and the basic administrative guideline was "trial and error".

On the other hand, this "campaign" style involved centralizing decisions around the highest level of operational authority - the Executive Secretary. This person was assisted by a "technical unit" in charge of the pedagogic sector, and by a group of financial administrators as well as other general services. Under these circumstances, the Foundation's president and the two councils established in the statutes - the Administrative Council and the Board of Trustees, covered perspectives in the institutional policy from the point of view of the objectives and strategy.

This improvised operational scheme which was principally characterized by a notable administrative aggressiveness on the part of the state coordinators as well as by the mystique and emotional involvement of the community, led to satisfactory results for the movement. In 1970, 613 municipalities signed agreements with MOBRAL involving 510,000 students of which 169,000 concluded their basic literacy instruction (33% productivity). In the following year, 1971, a total of 3,405 municipalities were incorporated in the movement, totalling 2,500,000 students with approximately 1,093,000 concluding their basic literacy instruction and bringing productivity up to 44 percent.

RATIONALIZATION AND OUTLINING OF THE SYSTEM

The high rate of operation and maintenance of the "campaign" style led to a rapid disintegration of MOBRAL's administration. The financial and supporting sectors of MOBRAL's Central Office were not able to keep pace with the movement's rapid expansion and in the states, the coordinators became excessively autonomous - as a result of the objectives themselves - leading to a progressive disintegration and effacement of the initial conditions.

This natural loss of control, for "campaign" type organizations, was more readily recognized in MOBRAL's Central Office which evidenced clear signs of exhaustion with respect to the possibilities of maintaining a balance between the means and the ends. The establishment of two "Regional Coordinations", encompassing the Southern and Northeastern States in 1971 and the provisions for extending this measure to the other regions at the beginning of 1972 - were indicative of an effort to contain the movement's entropy in its national scope.

This, coupled with pressure from the Ministry of Education and Culture, in an effort to force MOBRAL to conform to the criteria of public administration, prophesied the transformation of MOBRAL's Central Office into a typically bureaucratic agency, with the traditional pyramidal and departmental form. The appearance of centralized pressure from the federal entity on state and municipal levels could also be foreseen from the history of national education and in accordance with previous technical studies: (see "Esboço de Estratégia para a Implantação da Reforma Administrativa no MEC" - a Study of Strategy for Implantation of Administrative Reform in the MEC - Lamartine P. Costa - CNRM-IPEA, 1967).

However, the substitution of the Executive Secretary and other key positions in MOBRAL's Central Office at the beginning of 1972 gave rise to a reversal of expectations.

Among the various measures taken was an administrative reorganization in an effort to prevent the entity's strangulation. Technically this problem was approached through a definition and concomitant analysis of the situation in the light of organizational and administrative theory. It was also intended that practical precautionary measures in the sector should be consistent and oriented by a widely publicized strategy, thereby forcing a reduction of the tendency to improvisation.

The diagnosis (which was arrived at in a short period of time in order that the facts should not outdate the solutions) showed an inequivocal deterioration as demonstrated by the following aspects:

a) EXCESS OF BOTTLENECKS - originating principally from the lack of adequate circulation of information and training of personnel involved in the various functions;

b) CASE-BY-CASE TREATMENT (various cases that demand immediate solutions from directors), intense and varied, hampering initiative on the facts;

c) LACK OF SPECIALIZATION (everyone does everything);

d) AMBIGUOUSLY DEFINED OBJECTIVES - or objectives which are too frequently altered;

e) LACK OF COORDINATION - of actions;

f) IMPROVISED ADMINISTRATION with the exception of some financial, purchasing and accounting criteria;

g) A TENDENCY TOWARD ISOLATION among the different groups composing MOBRAL's Central Office;

h) EXTERNAL PRESSURE FROM OTHER ENTITIES which were involved or wished to become involved with MOBRAL, resulting in distortion of priorities;

i) A latent tendency to the CREATION OF UNNECESSARY POSITIONS;

j) IGNORANCE AS TO THE USE OF MODERN ADMINISTRATIVE TECHNIQUES;

l) DISPROPORTIONATE USE OF THE EXISTING MEANS with relation to the ends;

m) FEAR OF INNOVATION usually viewed as a threat to the results already obtained;

n) ORAL COMMUNICATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE thereby hampering the systematizationsof information and replacement of personnel in the various routines;

o) LACK OF CRITERIA FOR SELECTION and observation of personnel productivity;

p) ABSENCE OF SUPERVISORY AND CONTROL CRITERIA;

q) PROFESSIONAL INCAPACITY of a great number of personnel;

r) RESISTANCE TO THE READJUSTMENT OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES;

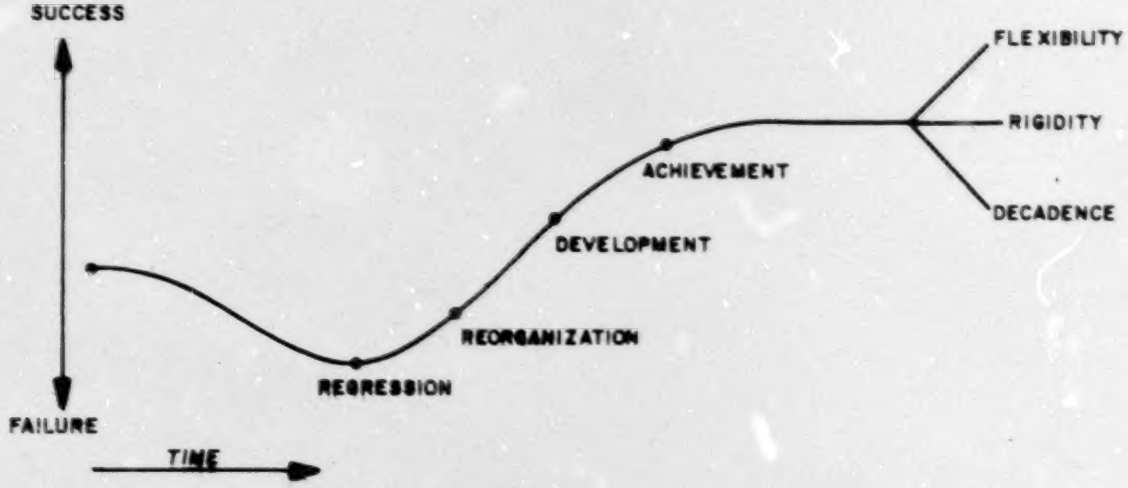
s) STRATIFICATION OF KEY FUNCTIONS.

The interpretation of these facts was linked to the organizational growth curve (figure 1), a well-known device in Organization and Management - through which MOBRAL was recognized as undergoing a regression phase. Something similar was bound to happen with the State Coordinations that still functioned in the "campaign" stage, but were showing the first signs of

exhaustion which seeped from the top levels of administration.

It is worth pointing out in this context that the attitude of the personnel connected with pedagogic activities was one of unawareness of the conditions prevailing in the administration. A sort of "ideology" was identified, based on the principles of education and the emotional reactions surrounding the problem of illiteracy, that gave excessive emphasis to the ends in detriment to the means. This group showed great diligence in their duties, especially in field activities and gave the impression of being the center of vitality of the organization. The circumstances were similar to military and religious events where results may be obtained by isolated units relatively deprived of means but imbued with a high "esprit de corps" and commitment to the objectives to be achieved.

FIGURE 1



The theoretical position achieved, aside from the definition of the problem, focused on four aspects: (1) the optimum degree and type of decentralization of the movement; (2) maintenance of those positive aspects of the "campaign" style; (3) the

validity of "trial and error" for the development of the organization; and (4) evolution towards a dualistic organizational model.

The problem of optimum decentralization has been inherently linked with the development of large organizations. One of the historically important moments of administration science was that of the federal or structural decentralization effected in the General Motors Corporation of the United States in 1921 - currently one of the world's largest corporate entities. This theory at present identifies and recommends different types of decentralization in accordance with the characteristics of the various organizations.

Centralization and decentralization are, in general, terms used to indicate the relation of authority in the administrative levels of an organization and also express the idea of transference of authority among political units of local and central government - Professor Paulo Reis Vieira of the Brazilian School of Public Administration, when studying this last concept in a quantitative study which involved 45 countries in 1967, concluded through correlations that:

a) the greater the number of local units in the country, the greater the degree of decentralization;

b) the older the country, the greater the degree of decentralization;

c) the higher the GNP, the greater the degree of decentralization;

d) the greater the development of the means of communication, the greater their degree of decentralization;

e) the most highly urbanized countries have a greater degree of decentralization than those less urbanized;

f) industrialized countries have a greater degree of decentralization than agricultural countries.

On the other hand, it was not possible to prove the relationship between decentralization and territorial expanse, political regime, heterogeneous ethnic composition, size of population, demographic density and the volume of expenditures in public service.

Another author, the American Kenneth Boulding, studied the problem in the light of the general systems theory, and linked decentralization to the optimum size of an organizational system. In this case, communications constitute a limiting factor especially between the top and the base of the hierarchy; after a certain limit is reached, it is not economical to maintain this type of relationship, especially in non-hierarchic and decentralized organizations.

This being the case, centralization fails to optimize the size of an organization due to fragmentation of the communications network, whereas decentralization does not make full use of the size because of a diseconomy of scale in the exchange of information.

This point of view evidently refers to the extremes of the centralization-decentralization "continuum", indicating however, the difficulty of finding the ideal situation. Kenneth Boulding, in this matter suggests that the centralization and decentralization cycles which occur in almost all large organizations are caused by the search for this optimum; this has been proved in the large state organization of the Soviet Union, in the development of the Catholic Church and in the large American and Japanese companies. In Brazil, this phenomenon may be seen in examples of the social security organization, railway network and in the relationship between the federal government and municipal and state governments.

From the point of view of authority relationship, Murdick and Ross, two American authors, analized the problem in the light of delegation of this authority. This problem has two extremes - absolute centralization and absolute decentralization; the optimum point in this case moves according to:

1) the personality of those who delegate authority;
2) cost (centralized decisions are the most expensive);
3) political uniformity (greater uniformity requires less delegation of authority);
4) organizational complexity - greater complexity means greater control and centralization of authority;
5) the traditions of the activities;
6) the existence of good managers (encourages delegation).

The careful consideration of this technical information in relation to MOBRAL, indicated the viability of maintaining the operative style of the Municipal Committees and effecting the "federal" decentralization of the State Coordinations in view of the fact that this type of governmental relationship constitutes one of the causes of economic and social development.

Evidently this would imply establishing an efficient system of communications.

With reference to delegation of authority, on the other hand, it was decided to opt for internal "preventive" decentralization among the State Coordinations in order to avoid the loss of administrative control experienced in MOBRAL's Central Office. The deficiencies shown by the precarious relationship between MOBRAL's Central Office and State Coordinations and Municipal Committees would be regarded as normal in order to neutralize the centralizing reactions among the various levels of decision-making.

The consideration of the items set forth by Murdick and Ross especially in relation to MOBRAL's Central Office, showed the viability of dividing the powers of the Executive Secretary, and divesting the organization of its "campaign" overtones.

These solutions would prevent MOBRAL from entering the spontaneous cycle of centralization versus decentralization, although the risk of organizational neglect would increase.

With reference to the second item of the theoretical position, the maintenance of positive characteristics of the movement's "campaign" style, our approach concurred with the interpretation of the organization as an open system (persons, groups, informal organization) that were superimposed on a closed system (structure, regulations, functions, formal organization).

Since a positive emotional atmosphere existed on the part of the personnel working with the end-activities in relation to the organization's objectives, it was decided to maintain this tendency, stimulating it wherever possible. Under these circumstances, all efforts towards reorganization could be concentrated on the closed system of the organization.

Theoretically, this would mean letting the open system function within its natural characteristics. Personnel training as recommended by normal organizational standards of improvement could be put off, and the managerial style would consist purely of group leadership.

This alternative would offer the advantage of regaining the organization's development within a short period of time, as well as greater chances of success, bearing in mind that it is easier to change structures than behavior. The most apparent disadvantage would lie in the permanent state of conflict between

the formal organization (closed system) and the informal organization (open system), due to the recognition and encouragement given the latter.

As far as the validity of "trial and error" for the development of the organization is concerned, it was noticeable that MOBRAL mediated in a complex social environment, the dimensions of which - similarly to what companies perform in relation to their markets - would be highly problematic. Furthermore, any long-term study would run the risk of falling behind in the organization's operational timing - that is, the facts would outdate the validity of the conclusions.

Under preliminary conditions, the solution would also be to utilize emphatically and explicitly the "trial and error" basis, especially in view of the fact that in MOBRAL, the stimulus--response cycle proved extremely rapid making this type of approach viable.

In the case of evolution towards a dualistic model of organization, the theoretical definition resulted from the study of technical information on the problem of decentralization.

The Canadian authors Brian Shaw and John Must, in their 1971 study of the administrative and political approach adopted in the Popular Republic of China, emphasized the Chinese type of operational decentralization which consists of generally assigning simple routines of autonomous execution to the community and more complex ones to higher levels.

This "dualistic model" of administration enables the organization to face the variety of local cases without involving the higher levels of decision centers, which can therefore concentrate on those duties requiring sophisticated and technical knowledge.

The success of this guidance can be evaluated in the social sector by the efficiency of the health services: at the community level the so-called "barefoot doctors" who are only trained in short-term courses operate, and only refer to hospitals those cases which are beyond their capacity to deal with. The preventive guidance given by these "doctors" in the 26,000 communes of the country enabled illnesses caused by lack of basic sanitation to be eradicated, a task previously considered impossible. Clearing the overcrowded hospitals progressively improved the quality of services which in some cases achieved international renown.

The theoretical application of the dualistic model to MOBRAL,

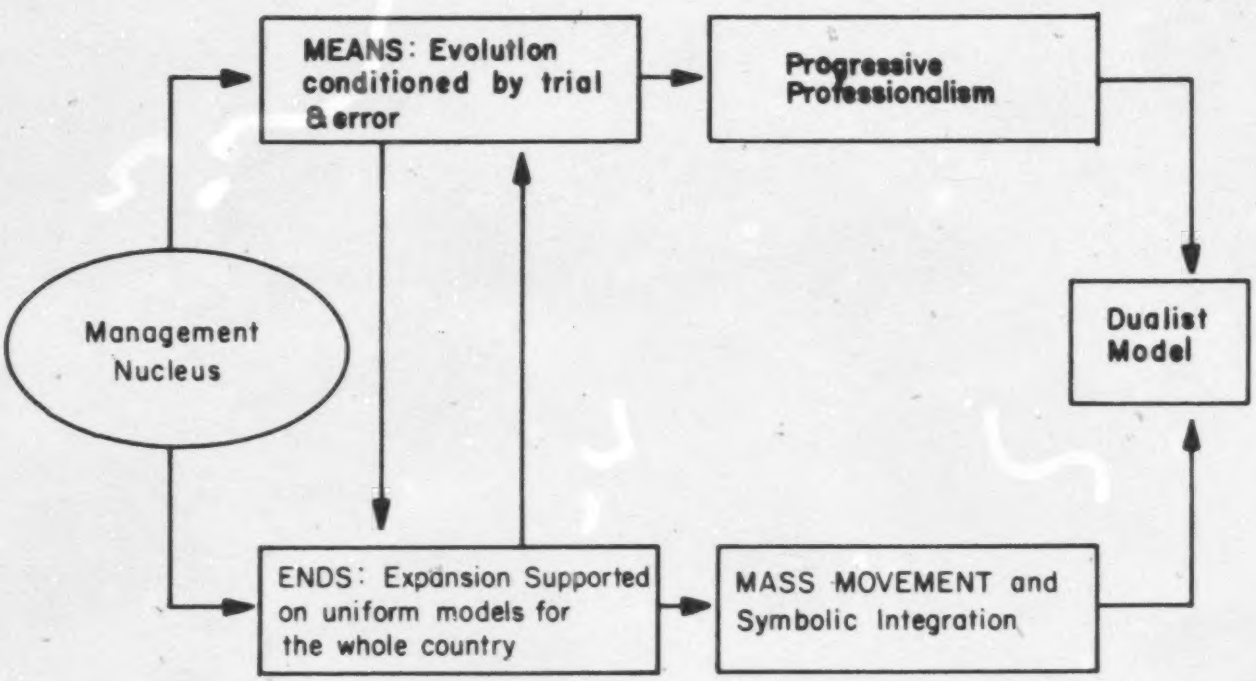
naturally proved to be relevant. Reorganization of MOBRAL's Central Office and State Coordinations within the operative and structural conditions, could lead to sophistication aiming at better productivity, while duties - even though sub-utilized - could remain simple at class and community levels. A mass movement, thus outlined, though it might contain contrasts, would be controllable, as opposed to the "campaign" style or to a hierarchic and bureaucratic plan from the top to the bottom, which would lean toward progressive disintegration.

The administrative detours detected by the definition of the problem, taken into consideration by the theoretic dimensions, resulted in a strategic guidance that seemed to come face to face with the necessity of reorganizing MOBRAL without reducing its impetus.

It was possible, in fact, to expand the movement's activities following the criteria which were already established in the pedagogic field for a mass-scale program; uniform models of teaching methods, of the training of literacy instructors and teaching material (which differs according to the editor, but which remains within the same methodological principles).

Mass education - which the adopted methodology does not produce "en masse" - duly integrated and motivated by the idea of the eradication of illiteracy, could take shape with the solutions put into effect, aiming at implanting a dualistic model of organization and management. Figure 2 shows the logic of this proposition.

FIGURE 2


MEANS: Evolution conditioned by trial & error
Progressive Professionalism
Management Nucleus
Dualist Model
ENDS: Expansion Supported on uniform models for the whole country
MASS MOVEMENT and Symbolic Integration

The reorganization strategy intended at the time was then outlined, seeking rationalization, as far as the diagnostic aspect was concerned, and based on a systems structural design as a theoretical position.

The systems approach was, in fact, a modern trend in organization and management and could accomodate MOBRAL's peculiar make-up: parts that need to remain autonomous, are largely scattered over a continental area, and show different degrees and types of decentralization, as well as an operational dualism (simple vs. complex).

It was thus that the term "MOBRAL System" was introduced and soon acquired connotations of organizational reform, permanent change and, most of all, non-hierarchical integration.

The goal which was widely-publicized and discussed both inside MOBRAL's Central Office and outside with the state and regional coordinators was: "To evolve toward a simple and rational SYSTEM, DESIGNED WITH A DEGREE OF DECENTRALIZATION AND FLEXIBILITY CONDUCIVE TO IMMEDIATE AND EFFICIENT ANSWERS FOR OBSTACLES IN MOBRAL'S ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION, AND MAINTAINING A CONTINUOUS UPDATING PROCESS".

In order to implement such measures as would help attain that goal, the Department of Organization and Methods (ASSOM) was created in early 1972 and immediately set out to deal with the problems of administrative rationalization in MOBRAL's Central Office.

This was just one of a series of radical measures taken by the new Executive Office which, contrary to existing prospects, increased MOBRAL's achievement drive. The top priority goal became the movement's extension to all Brazilian municipalities, a task which had not, as yet, been accomplished by any other organization in the country.

This "drive" created a favorable psychological atmosphere for the operation of an O & M (Organization and Methods) body within an educational institution. As administrators well know, specialists in the social areas show an aversion to organizational criteria which they generally view as bureaucratic. This fact was fully known to MOBRAL's Central Office, although the goals set by the directors compelled educators and administrators to reach an understanding in the interest of the results which were to be attained.

As minor problems in the institution's rationalization were dealt with, ASSOM began to outline the MOBRAL System through the trial and error approach.

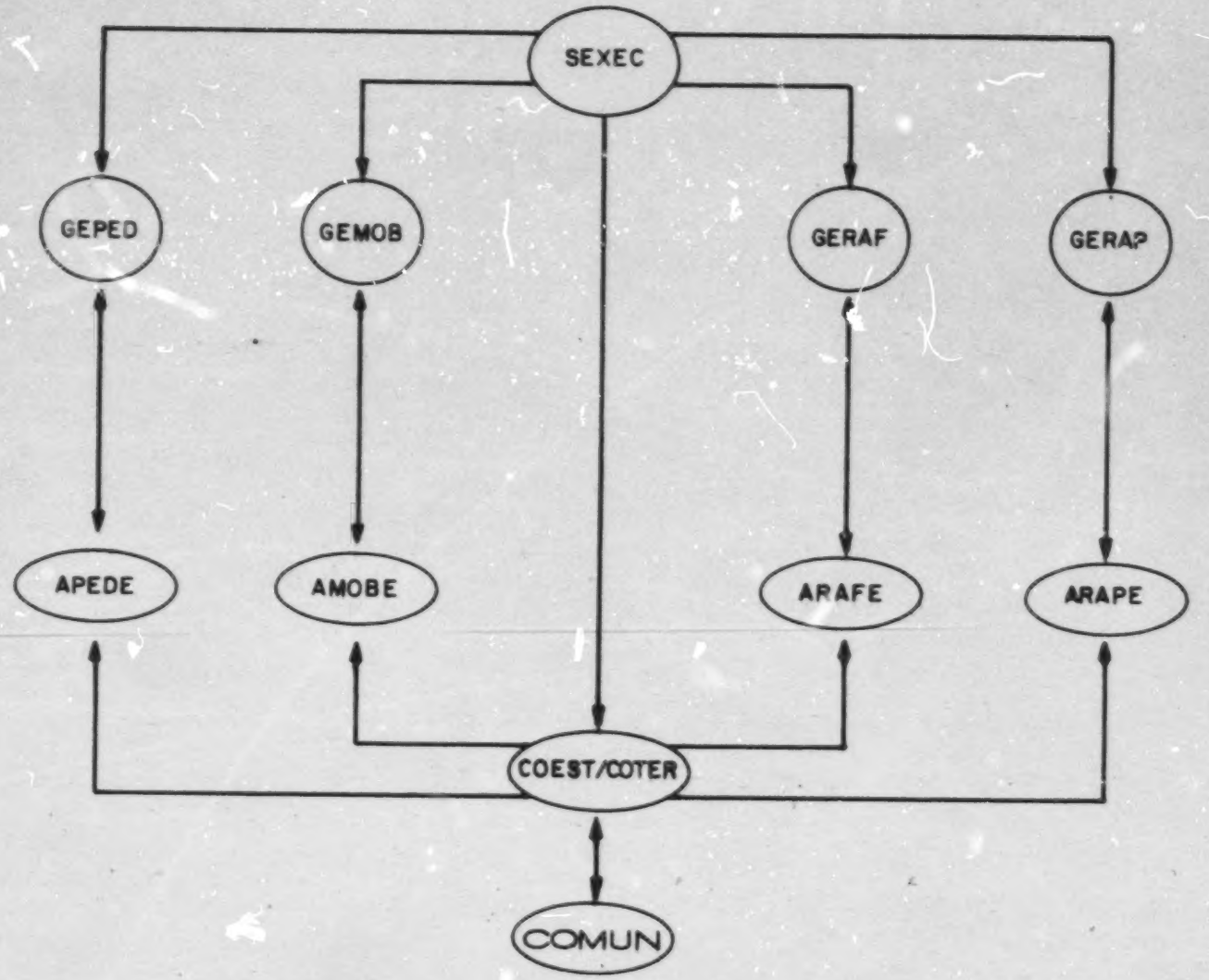
The frame of reference for this gradual outlining was the LOGIC OF A SYSTEMS STRUCTURAL DESIGN which views organizations in terms of five dimensions to be made compatible: hierarchy, work, result, decision and interrelationship. From a methodological point of view, the particular characteristics of these dimensions are examined through analyses and syntheses performed in sequence or simultaneously, emphasizing key tasks leading to the organization's goals.

The appropriate methodology is summed up in the very definition of an organizational system: "a set of parts which form a whole related to a given objective." In other words, given a goal as reference, the particular may be recognized in order to have a view of the general, and from there identify and characterize the parts.

In terms of communication, the interrelationship dimension transmits an awareness of the organizational whole, while the remaining dimensions represent processes. Thus, hierarchy and work can be viewed as transformation processes involving human, financial and material resources, while result and decision can be considered transformation processes of information, seeking a mutual adjustment of the organization's parts. These conditions can be represented in terms of levels and flows by means of organizational charts and flow-charts.

Figure 3 shows the first outline of MOBRAL's basic interrelationships. The CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY are discussed below, following the logic of a systems structural design.

FIGURE 3



SYMBOLS : ——→ Flow of decision

←——→ Flow of norms, supervision and control, technical assistance and strategic orientation

ACRONYMS :

SEXEC - Executive Secretary; COEST - State Coordination

COTER - Territorial Coordination;
COMUN - Municipal Committees;
GEPED - Pedagogic Management;
GEMOB - Mobilization Management;
GERAF - Finance Management; GERAP - Support Management;
APEDE - Pedagogic Agent; AMOBE - Mobilization Agent;
ARAFE - Finance Agent; ARAPE - Support Agent.

(i) HIERARCHY/WORK

- directing interrelationships among the movement's main functions, with an emphasis on easy access and autonomy among the three basic decision levels: MOBRAL's Central Office, State Coordinations (COEST) and Municipal Committees (COMUN);

- horizontal placement of specialized bodies dealing with ends and means, in order to avoid mutual interference in the decision-making process, an element likely to arise in a vertical arrangement of different rungs or levels of decision-making;

- creation of decentralized flows in the areas of specialization, norms, supervision and control, technical assistance and strategic orientation, while also providing a basis for eventual professionalization and training of personnel;

- quick and easy comprehension for the system's graphic presentation to ensure that it will be readily grasped by the large number of persons involved;

- emphasis on the secondary importance of hierarchical aspects, coupled with a stress on the interrelationships and objectives;

- a consolidated autonomy for COEST and COMUN defined as the initiative to make choices regarding the attainment of goals, in accordance with the particular characteristics of the local situations, while complying with the national norms issued by MOBRAL's Central Office;

- utmost support to managers' initiative regarding the operation, in view of the need for leadership over teams and groups working under MOBRAL's "managerial style" which is that of an open system or an informal organization;

- guidance for the "means-managements" (GERAP and GERAF) concerning FAYOL's functional structural design which is the most efficient

one for small organizations processing resources, following the basic principles of hierarchy, unity of command, range of control and specialization, and relying on its own organizational chart with a distribution by sectors and nuclei;

- guidance for the "end-managements" (GEPED and GEMOB) concerning a matrix structural design which is the most suitable for organizations processing projects and knowledge in general, in order to make better use of the multi-disciplinarian background of participating professionals and the team-work in the field;

- definition of norms following traditional models, standardized and compiled in manuals, in order to limit the tendency toward improvisation; concurrent verbal authorization to act flexibly in relation to these norms in order to promote their use as REFERENCE material rather than as REGULATIONS;

- considering planning and control as functions related to the organization's maturity and, therefore, fostering evolution of the MOBRAL System through a project approach, in addition to operational routines and case studies (involving minor problems that require immediate decisions from the management), which are NORMAL risks inherent in organizations acting upon the social environment.

(ii) RESULT/DECISION

- to create an awareness of the goals within the organization at all levels and in all areas of activity, since the interfaces (connecting points) in a systems organization are regulated by the results to be attained, as well as by the flow of interrelationships(this should not be mistaken for "Management by Objectives" which is a long-term implementation method, more suited to the assembly-line type of organization);

- to interpret decentralization at MOBRAL as a VERTICAL process, in the structural (or federal) case of the COESTs and COMUNs, and as a HORIZONTAL process as concerns the delegation of power of the agents in relation to the managements;

- to maintain the main axis of the decision flow - formed by the connection SEXEC-COEST-COMUN - free from interference, in order to facilitate direct and speedy decision-making among the three levels of the organization;

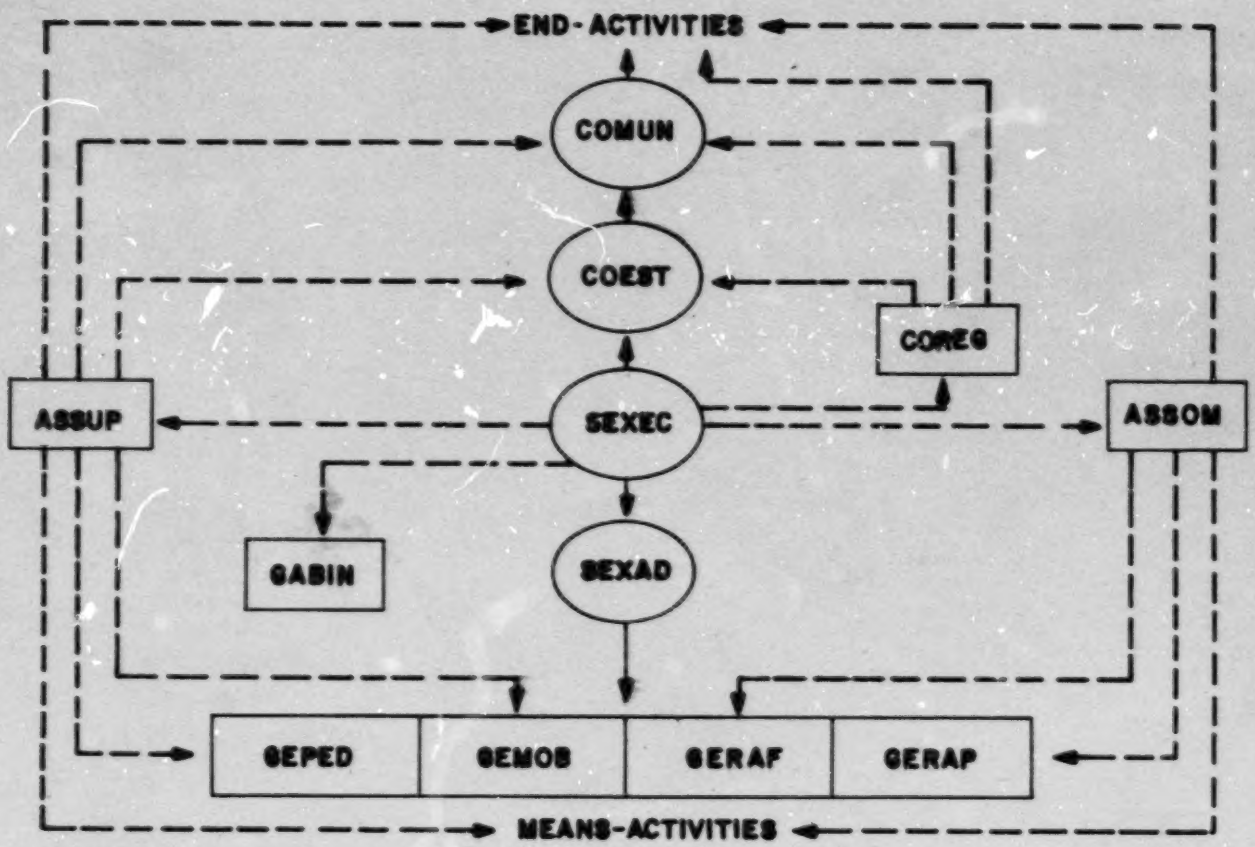
- to allow the COESTs their own structural design around the basic coordinator-agents configuration, as well as specific criteria for reconciling the coordinator's decisions with the strategic guidelines issued by the managements of MOBRAL's Central Office.

In short, by its characteristics and implementation strategy, the first blueprint of MOBRAL's basic interrelationships presented a decentralized system which was easily understood, with a minimum number of levels based on the flow of direct relationships between the top and lower ranks, stressing such means of regulation as goals, autonomy of parts and levels, normative references and interrelationships. The graphic presentation of this system, in turn, intended to illustrate these conditions by dichotomizing means and ends, in view of the strategy chosen, and by using acronyms, not only to facilitate communication, but also to capitalize on the Brazilian proneness to place high value on such symbols.

The choice of an input-output-process-feedback design for the MOBRAL System did not prove valid in view of the fact that the actual basic interrelationship concerns "subsystems", namely agents, managements, coordinations, Municipal Committee, etc. The input-output-process-feedback model is adequate, however, for the internal handling of these subsystems and was, in fact, applied not through flow-charts, but through norms.

A different flow-chart was obviously needed to outline the MOBRAL System from the point of view of MOBRAL's Central Office, showing the interrelationships between internal bodies and external ones and seeking the coordination and definition of a national perspective. This outline (Figure 4) includes the Department of Supervision and Planning, ASSUP, created as a counterpart to ASSOM to handle "end-activities"; the Regional Coordinations (COREG), now in the position of advisory bodies; the Cabinet (GABIN), established as a personal staff to the Executive Secretary in response to the overload of information requiring decisions at that focal point of the system; the auxiliary post of Assistant Executive Secretary (SEXAD).

FIGURE 4



SYMBOLS : Flow of supervision and control

Flow of decision

The following formal explanations were made, at the time, in relation to this outline:

- The coordination flow-chart is an instrument for internal distribution, while the outline of basic relationships was intended for public knowledge. The simplicity of the latter provides a picture that is easily grasped, stresses the main decision-making points, separates the means from the ends, focuses on the key decentralized relationship between SEXEC and COEST and affords a general idea of the strategy.

Evidently the "Board" type of administration would be more democratic, perhaps more suitable in terms of public services; however it would certainly not provide the same flexibility, vitally necessary in an organizational system.

Obviously the risk of having a general administrator such as an Executive Secretary, who is inefficient or does damage to his organization, is greater here than in the case of a board of directors; however the solution in this case would be to replace the person rather than to change the system. The presence of political reasons that make it impossible to replace that person, would not imply that the problem lies in the structure and in the functioning of the organization.

- The coordination flow-chart bears a deliberate emphasis on end-activities and means-activities, since the success of MOBRAL's O & M depends on the efforts of those involved to define and maintain a balance between the means and the ends.

- The SEXAD is placed in the coordination flow-chart in conjunction with the SEXEC and not as an intermediary between the latter and the managements. It is the second highest rank in MOBRAL's hierarchic scale, maintaining close contact with the SEXEC's decisions and substituing for him when necessary. It is an executive post, as is the SEXEC, and therefore independent of the Departments, except in specific cases of substitution; in the relationship between the SEXEC and the managements, the SEXAD's participation involves separating the essential from the accessory, so as to free the SEXEC for required speedy assessment and decisions compatible with MOBRAL's strategic outline, as well as drafting guidelines for activities about to be launched; the SEXAD is, therefore, the SEXEC's right arm in the coordination of tactical action.

- ASSUP and ASSOM are advisory bodies through wich the SEXEC can coordinate strategic action. They carry out their tasks in three main dimensions:
a) planning;
b) penetrating the managements and eventually the COESTs to expedite long-range activities;
c) spotting bottlenecks and digressions.

- Within this context, ASSOM gears its participation with an emphasis on financial administration and supporting activities, whereas ASSUP assigns a higher priority to pedagogic activities and to the mobilization of community resources. In terms of general coordination, ASSOM is linked to the means-activities and ASSUP to the end-activities, although, to maintain a balance, ASSOM refers to the ends and ASSUP to the means. In this regard, both departments fulfill their purposes through norms (bulletins, manuals, etc.), direct supervision (contracts, visits, etc.), indirect supervision (questionnaires,requests for reports, etc.), control (evaluation of results, account rendering, etc.), technical assistance (workshops, meetings, training, consultation, etc.) and strategic orientation (basic documents, training coordinators, etc.), duly approved by the SEXEC. In addition to this, these departments carry out planning functions (studies and research, diagnostic, alternative strategy, progress reports, evaluation, etc.). A permanent interaction is expected between ASSOM and ASSUP, which should aim at attaining a balance and compatibility between means and ends. Finally, it should be pointed out that the actions of these departments - which are characteristic of the staff - should not be restrictive, but rather preventive, and should not under any circumstances be seen as decisions.

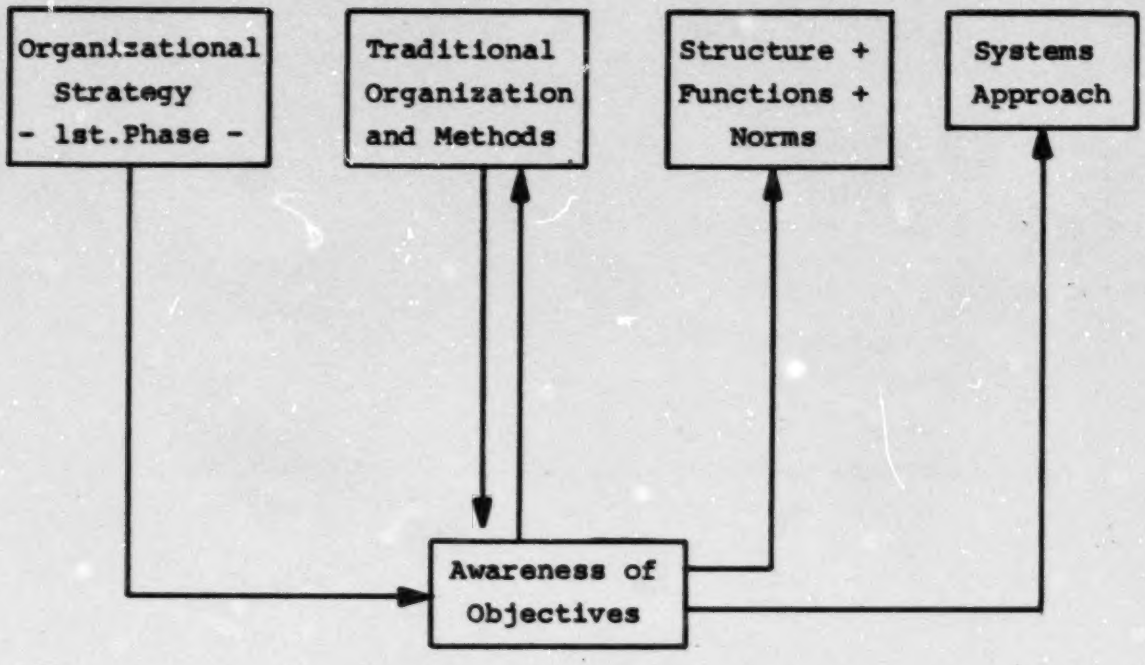
Within the present coordination outline, the COREGs are also staff members analogous to ASSOM and ASSUP, that is, they are tools of the SEXEC operating at a regional level for planning, penetration of the COESTs to expedite long-range action and spot bottlenecks and possible digressions; they are directly linked to the SEXEC, providing information and receiving guidance as to procedures particularly in relation to end-activities. They are not intermediaries for the SEXEC, nor do they make decisions at a regional level; they simply follow a set routine based on the various documents issued by MOBRAL' Central Office. The COREGs are organized in similar fashion to the COESTs, simply and functionally, the experts involved being either tacticians (penetration in the COESTs, spotting bottlenecks and digressions) or strategists (planning in its different aspects), gathered around the Regional Coordinator. As opposed to the agents who are directly linked to the managements, the COREGs are not organizationally linked to ASSOM or to ASSUP, in view of the need for the SEXEC to make decisions on the basis of established points of reference and of national as well as regional perspectives, without any interference; occasionally, they provide technical assistance for the COESTs.

- The SEXEC's personal staff is GABIN, with three advisory bodies at its disposal: ASSUR, ASCAP and ARINT (Legal Department, Applied Communications Department and International Relations Department, respectively). These departments, in addition to having a direct link to the SEXEC may penetrate any area of MOBRAL in the pursuit of their goals, providing the latter have been duly approved by the SEXEC. For the purpose of long-range strategic actions, ASSUR will reconcile its goals with ASSOM, and ASCAP and ARINT with ASSUP, given the need to achieve compatibility in the planning of means and ends, respectively. These contacts with ASSOM and ASSUP are to be processed through GABIN.

- For the purpose of defining authority and in order to prevent the well-known phenomenon of friction between the advisory staff (Departments) and the main administrators (Managements), the managers from MOBRAL's Central Office hold the same rank (functional level) as the coordinators of the Advisory Departments. The COESTs are likewise equated with the COREGs, barring such cases of delegated authority as SEXEC might determine for the attainment of specific goals.

These lines of action finally shaped the first phase of the organizational strategy whose logic is shown in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5



CONSOLIDATION OF THE SYSTEM

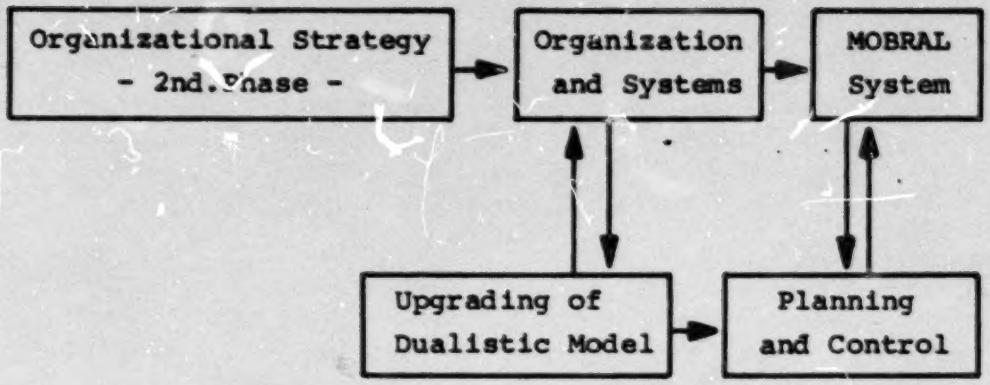
The results presented by MOBRAL at the end of 1972 proved that the reorganization had managed to adjust the system toward greater efficiency and to eliminate the risks inherent in the campaigns.

From a universe of 3953 municipalities, a total of 3,643 were reached; the number of students involved in the agreements were approximately 4,200,000, with a success rate (in terms of students completing literacy instruction) of 2 million(47%). These figures were reached through the inclusion of municipalities which were far-removed from the large urban centers as well as those in rural areas. The Integrated Education program (elementary school instruction, carried out over a 12-month period following literacy instruction), advanced beyond the experimental stage (33 thousand students in 1971, in 181 municipalities) to become a large-scale operation: 800 thousand students in 1888 municipalities.

On the other hand, an expansion in the organization's activities of nearly 100%, in the course of one year, made it advisable to further refine the strategy with a view toward consolidating

the MOBRAL System. Figure 6 shows the logic adopted by ASSOM in early 1973.

FIGURE 6



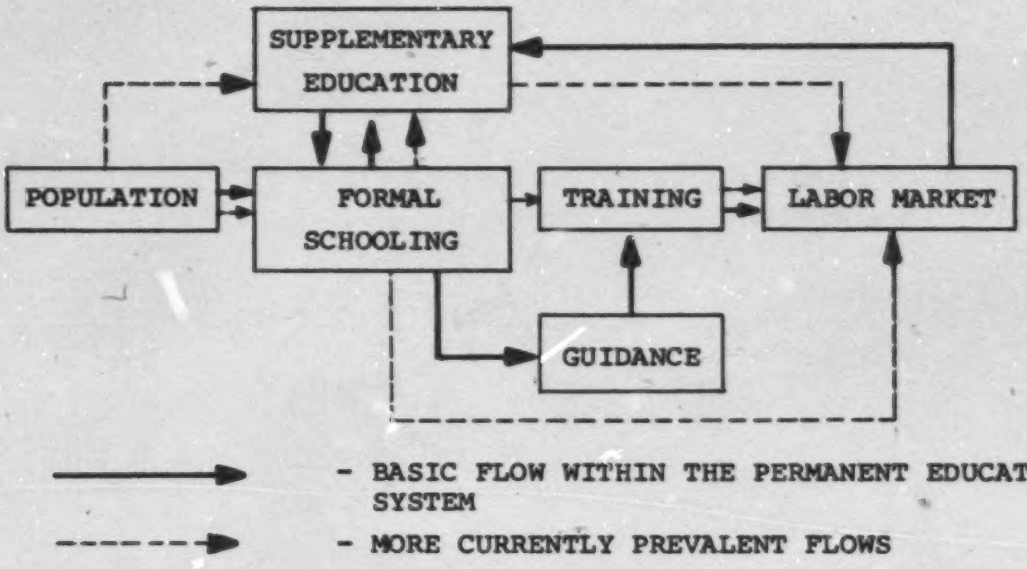
The transition from the first phase of organizational strategy to the second, followed the conceptualization of a General Systems Theory. In fact, it is generally recognized that systems naturally seek a homeostatic equilibrium among their component subsystems, and then strive to maintain the system's character.

During the last months of 1972, the end-areas were ostensibly pressing for QUALITY. In fact, MOBRAL was by then established as a mass-scale program with a reasonable degree of control over its activities. This seemed to underscore the qualitative flaws inherent in the large-scale operations, whereas the campaign phase had managed to disguise these deficiencies.

In addition to this, a process of assimilation of reorganization schemes on suitable bases was evident, from the point of view of MOBRAL's Central Office and the State Coordinations. The training of agents from the entire country's means-areas, effected in Rio de Janeiro in March, 1973, opened the possibilities of leading the MOBRAL System into a new phase.

This set of circumstances leading to MOBRAL's consolidation as an organizational system also included the definition of a future model for the institution's operations. The Executive Secretary, ARLINDO LOPES CORREA, chose a SYSTEM OF PERMANENT EDUCATION which he developed in general terms according to the outline shown in Figure 7.

FIGURE 7



In this case, MOBRAL's position would seek to lead the students from its programs toward professional training and guidance in relation to the job market. The eradication of illiteracy - which seems entirely feasible judging from the results of the institution's three-year operations - would involve the organization's gradual evolution toward its future goals.

It was obvious at the time that, regardless of the operational theory behind the permanent education system, the organizational basis for it would have to rely on networks of information, logistical supportandlocal agents to regulate the various flows (supervision).

In view of this, the second phase of organizational strategy, in addition to consolidating the MOBRAL System in accordance with the natural demands of a mass-scale program, also focused on the key points of a model planned for future implementation.

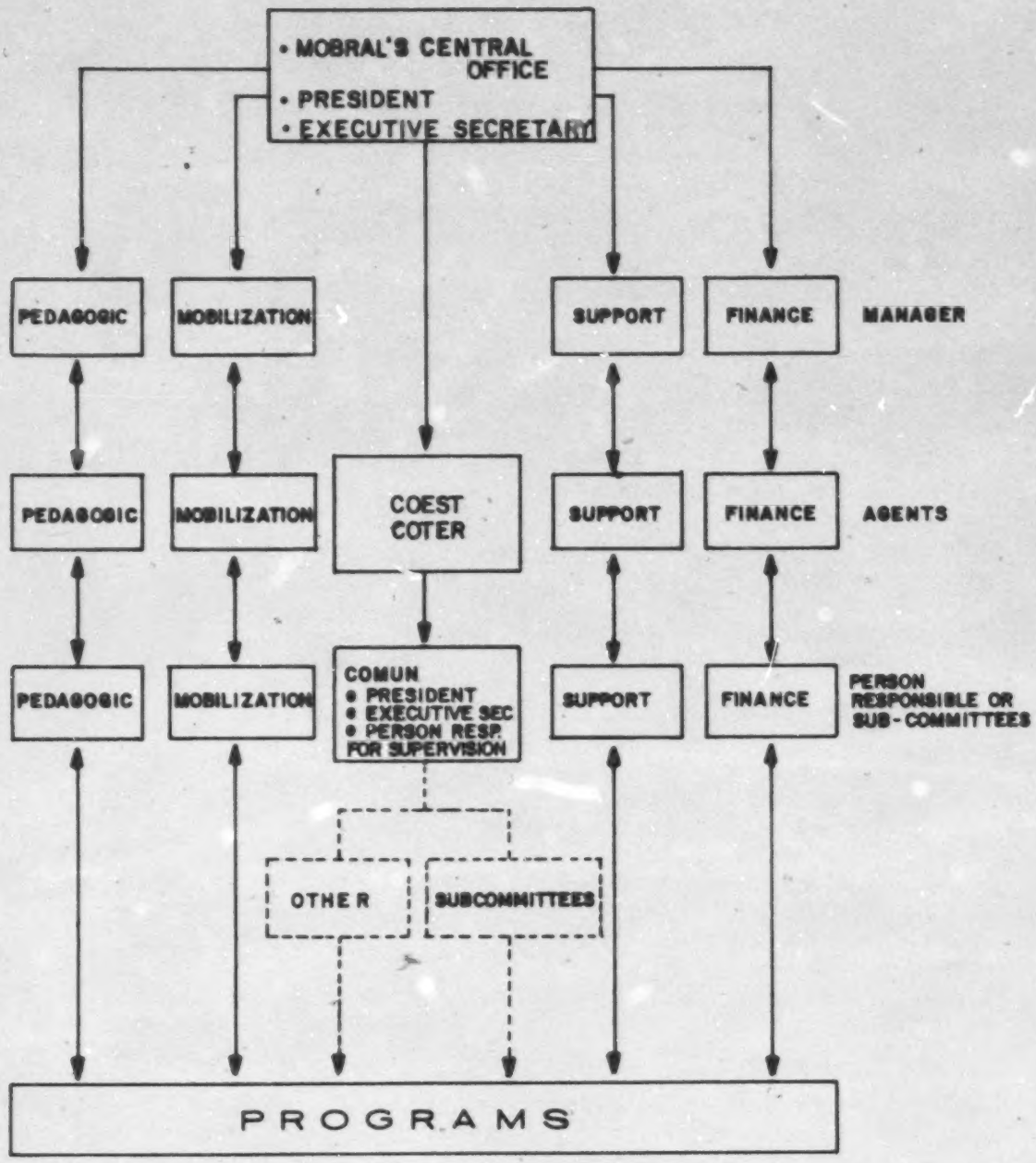
These considerations lent top priority to MOBRAL's Integrated Information System (SIIMO), developed by ASSOM and aimed, through the use of electronic data processing, at achieving greater efficiency in decision-making and information flow for the large number of autonomous units comprising the MOBRAL System.

Second priority was assigned by ASSOM, in response to a request from the Pedagogic Management, to the "Subsystem of Overall Supervision" (SUSUG) which, in addition to pedagogic supervision (in the sense of systematic guidance rather than surveillance) would employ its country-wide network of agents to fill the need for regulating the system's flow of means and ends (feedback) in the communities (levels of operation).

As a third priority, ASSOM sought to reach the bulk of persons involved in MOBRAL through the publication of two booklets: the "Basic Document" and the"MOBRAL System" whose purpose was to establish the operational conditions planned for the second phase of organizational strategy.

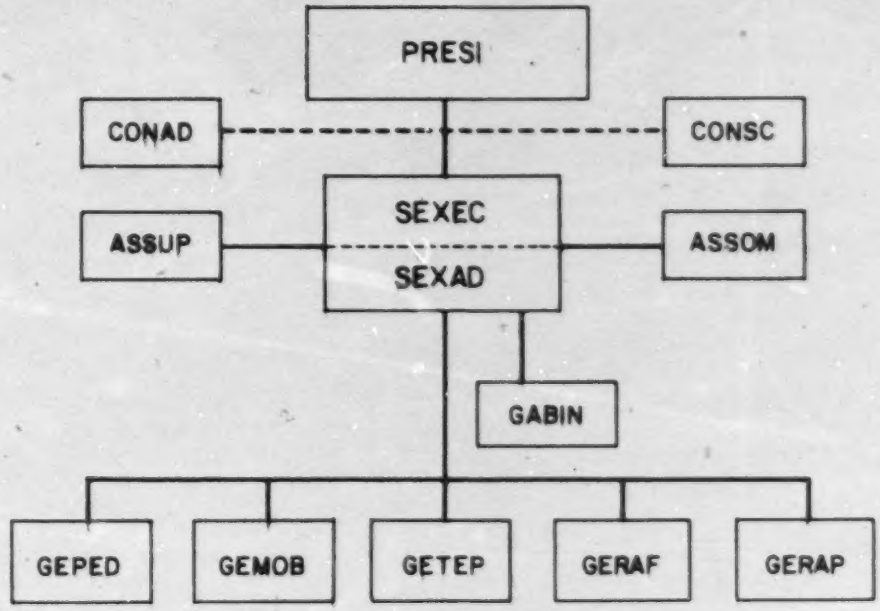
The first booklet was sent to members of the Municipal Committees describing in simple and mainly graphic terms MOBRAL's goals, organization and operations. This same medium was also used to extend the specialization flows to the base of the organization, providing the system's three basic levels with a sense of homogeneity, which had not been foreseen by the movement during its campaign phase (Figure 8).

FIGURE 8


• MOBRAL'S CENTRAL OFFICE
• PRESIDENT
• EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
PEDAGOGIC
MOBILIZATION
SUPPORT
FINANCE
MANAGER
PEDAGOGIC
MOBILIZATION
COEST
COTER
SUPPORT
FINANCE
AGENTS
PEDAGOGIC
MOBILIZATION
COMUN
• PRESIDENT
• EXECUTIVE SEC
• PERSON RESP. FOR SUPERVISION
SUPPORT
FINANCE
PERSON RESPONSIBLE OR SUB-COMMITTEES
OTHER
SUBCOMMITTEES
PROGRAMS

The "MOBRAL System" booklet, on the other hand, more sophisticated in its contents, was distributed among MOBRAL's Central Office and State Coordination personnel, as well as to interested parties outside the organization. This publication stated the operational norms, programs and projects in a straightforward and light style. The MOBRAL System was organizationally presented with its flow chart of basic interrelationships and an organizational chart properly updated and including the Training and Research Management (GETEP), which was being implemented at the time, to fill the obvious need for professionalization in the various staffs as well as for a more scientific knowledge of the actual implications of MOBRAL's involvement. Furthermore, the Presidency, the Administrative Council (CONAD) and the Board of Trustees (CONSC) were also included. Figure 9 presents this hierarchic structure as far as the level of managements of MOBRAL's Central Office.

FIGURE 9



In addition to the priorities established by ASSOM in regard to the consolidation of the MOBRAL System, the organizational strategy provided for an approach to planning and control. A Control Department was created in 1973 and began processing the information gathered from attendance sheets and reports from activities, projects and programs. The chief purpose of this was to keep track of key events in the system's operations in order to ensure that the organization would maintain its course, as well as to provide tools for planning which at that time was performed on a case-by-case basis, according to a project approach.

ASCON's operations acquired a rather peculiar form in terms of traditional administration, as it adjusted to MOBRAL's operating style.

The set of control routines that encompassed the entire organization from the Municipal Committees (attendance sheets) to the Executive Secretary (contracts signed with publishing houses, for instance) became known in ASSOM circles as the subsystem of control.

The same tendency was registered in relation to SIIMO and SUSUG which, after all, were also organizational subsystems, that is, segments of the organization considered autonomous, with managerial responsibility and observation of the results.

SIIMO and SUSUG indeed pervaded the entire MOBRAL System and operated at the level of MOBRAL's Central Office through "Directing Committees" in view of the need for the involvement in its operations on the part of managements and departments. When decisions were not issued by the Committees (which included managers and heads of departments or their assistants) the persons responsible for these subsystems sought bilateral agreements aimed at joint participation in the attainment of goals.

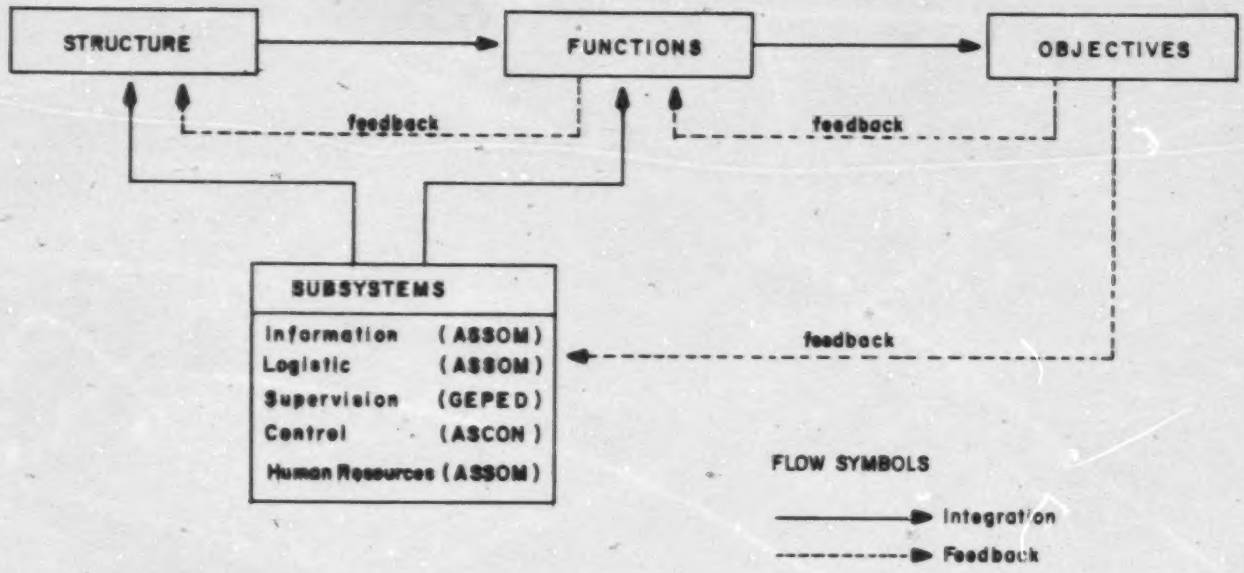
This type of cooperative operation proved to be quite efficient and led ASSOM to also view logistics and development of human resources (two typically overlapping areas) as subsystems as well. Both these activities were previously disjointed elements within the managements and departments; the reasons for integration and participation toward greater efficiency are obvious.

Another important reason for considering subsystems as autonomous entities was the time needed to attain maturity in operations. In other words, operations require long-term planning and control, as opposed to management and department activities

which are triggered by continuous "pressing" needs and intensive case studies characteristic of MOBRAL.

The use of subsystems to balance the operations of managements, departments, state coordinations and municipal committees clearly offered a solution. There are many points of intersection among activities which differ in nature but need to be compatible in relation to the goals and to the integration of the organization. Figure 10 illustrates this concept in a flow-chart showing the departments and managements which housed the coordinations of the subsystems.

FIGURE 10



On the other hand, the emphasis on subsystems adopted by ASSOM was a result of three pressure points present in the organization.

The first was a need to "invest" in MOBRAL's future, seeing that a basic orientation towards a permanent education program already existed. It appeared that existing subsystems (information, logistics, supervision, control and human resources) would form the basis for any organizational

alternatives in a permanent education entity which, to judge by its present concepts, should eventually reach the level of individual contact through material and informational transformation flows.

Secondly, a free and informal managerial style (open system) did not prevent the rise of a power structure - as is natural in any organization - represented by managers, heads of departments, coordinators etc.. Friction between these sectors and personal dissension among leaders in the normal run of competition became routine occurrences. Surprisingly, the subsystems remained immune to this kind of confrontation except where purely technical questions were concerned. In addition to being typically cooperative, subsystems were directed by coordinators who did not have the functional "status" of managers, and this probably lead to "peaceful coexistence".

The third pressure point was the actual implementation of planning and control, as established within the organizational strategy, and which at the same time had to attend to the requirements of minor but urgent cases which required improvised courses of action and at the same time threatened to transform MOBRAL's budget into mere fiction. The coexistence of properly planned and controlled subsystems with managements, departments, advisory bodies etc - dealing typically on the basis of specific cases - proved that an intermediate position was the ideal, at least in the present case.

Actually, an organization which functions in contact with an underdeveloped social environment could never establish a strict sequence of foreseeable events, except in certain specific activities which could be "closed" to a greater or lesser extent, according to their environment and to their technical characteristics.

In reference again to the phase of consolidation of the MOBRAL System, the evolution of norms toward greater flexibility should be pointed out as well as the creation of "peripheral units", also called "centers", which are representative of a decentralization "induced" by MOBRAL's Central Office.

Experience with standard norms which "tolerated" flexibility, pointed to the need for decentralization in order to attain a systems operation at MOBRAL. The autonomy of the different parts naturally implied establishing specific norms for each specialized area.

The risk of overlapping norms issued by different bodies was

eliminated by creating a NORMATIVE POLICY duly incorporated in the MOBRAL System's general scheme. The following chart shows the separation of different means of developing norms for different levels, with specific contents, characteristics and producers, controlled and coordinated by ASSOM.

NORM DEVELOPMENT LEVELS	CHARACTERISTICS	CONTENTS	PRODUCERS	MEANS
Mobral System	Generalization	Structure + Functions + Administrative Policy	SEXEC SEXAD ASSOM	Outlines + General Concepts
Subsystems	Functional Integration	Inter-relation ship	ASSOM ASCON	Flow-charts of inter - relation - ships and operational guidance
Standard - ization	Uniformity	Models	ASSOM ASCON MANAGEMENTS CENTERS	Tables Forms Catalogues Models
Operations	Specifications	Sequence of actions	CENTERS MANAGEMENTS	Operating Instructions

"Peripheral units" were also used as solution for the imminent overloading of MOBRAL's Central Office, not only due to the important role gradually acquired by the Training and Research Management (GETEP), but also in view of the new front opened by MOBRAL in the field of culture.

The autonomy given the managements until then was not considered sufficient by GETEP or by the new department created to activate cultural programs, in view of their functional peculiarities and the resulting need for a specific administrative standard.

As a result of the above, a profile similar to that of the State Coordinations was designed by ASSOM for the new "Training, Research and Documentation Center (CETEP)" - which replaced the GETEP - and for the "Cultural Activities Center (CECUT)". This profile provided for complete administrative and financial autonomy, including physical separation from MOBRAL's Central Office though operating in the same city of Rio de Janeiro.

With this outline which was similar to those of business conglomerates, it became possible to expand the MOBRAL System to include other functions suitable to its social context.

MATURITY OF THE SYSTEM

At the end of 1973 MOBRAL was well underway in attaining its objectives. All of Brazil's 3,953 municipalities were being reached by the system - an unheard-of achievement in this country - and five million students were enrolled in its classes during the year, giving literacy instruction to two million (40%). On the other hand, the Integrated Education program involved 1 million students in 1,984 municipalities.

Still in terms of quantitative data, MOBRAL had 25 thousand volunteers as members of its Municipal Committees. The latter organized 92 thousand classes per semester with an identical number of literacy instructors holding classes in schools (37%), private homes (32%), large and small farms (13%) and even outdoors (1%) (no information was available on the remaining 17%), with 67% of all classes given in rural areas.

There were 3,700 municipal supervisors (who were not paid by MOBRAL and were generally on loan from the municipal administrations) supporting and furthering all activities, as well as 735 area supervisors (about 1 for every 8 municipalities) and 91 state supervisors.

The total number of personnel in the Coordinations and MOBRAL's Central Office reached 1,400, and total funds handled by the organization during the year of 1973 amounted to 263 million cruzeiros (about US$ 44 million).

Although MOBRAL was then only in its fourth year of operation, it proved to be working successfully, according to its organizational growth curve (Figure 1). Having consolidated its reorganization, the system simultaneously evinces signs

of flexibility, of rigidity and of decadence.

From an organizational point-of-view ASSOM still had the initiative on alterations in structures and operations for the purpose of making the MOBRAL System work on the basis of a compromise between planning and control on the one hand, and extensive treatment of specific cases on the other hand. Due to this flexibility it became possible, at the end of 1973, for the Support Management to operate effectively as a logistics unit (computerized stock control, separate storage area, communications network, etc), to the point of creating a subsidiary sector (Support Group - GRUAP) with industrial characteristics.

The system's flexibility further permitted the addition of another management to the complex of MOBRAL's Central Office, the Professionalization Management (GEPRO), and it also permitted the operations of CETEP and CECUT Centers in relation to all other units to proceed without major disturbances.

Not only was the creation of new fronts easily assimilated by the systems structure, but the same was true for the restriction of some already existing fronts. This was the case of the Regional Coordinations (COREG) which became "Regional Controls" as part of the extention of the control subsystem.

From a structural point-of-view the COREGs were not acceptable because they created barriers between MOBRAL's Central Office and the State Coordinations - in terms of the basic decision flow of the System - even when functioning as a "staff" to the Executive Secretary at regional levels. The solution was to limit the activities of these sectors to a minimum as a step toward their final extinction.

It is easy to see that the systems structure operates through modules; this permits incorporations and exclusions to be made with less impact than in the case of structures of the type of the hierarchical pyramid. This concept was one of the basic reasons for joining ASSOM and ASSUP and creating the Organization and Planning Department (ASSOP).

As was previously mentioned, ASSOM's strategy was to obtain optimal planning balanced with intensive treatment of specific cases. However, the fragmentation of this function due to the existence of both ASSOM and ASSUP led to frequent contradictions in the Executive Secretary's staff and even to personal clashes in some cases.

It was further found that such conflicts affected the whole system down to the Subsystem of Overall Supervision at operational levels. Consequently, relying on the principle of trial and error, ASSOM recommended the merging of these planning departments, in the hope of improving overall efficiency of the organization..

This recommendation was consistent with the increasing pressure, evident early in 1974, to rationalize MOBRAL's budget which was still disjointed and unrealistic to a great extent. A single ways and means department would facilitate the rational allocation of funds to all sections of the system, especially important for the first year in which MOBRAL was not expected to show a surplus.

On the other hand, with ASSOP functioning as a planning department of ways and means for the entire MOBRAL System, it became possible to implement the plan, suggested by various areas of the organization, for making subsystem coordinators work together to attain a better adjustment.

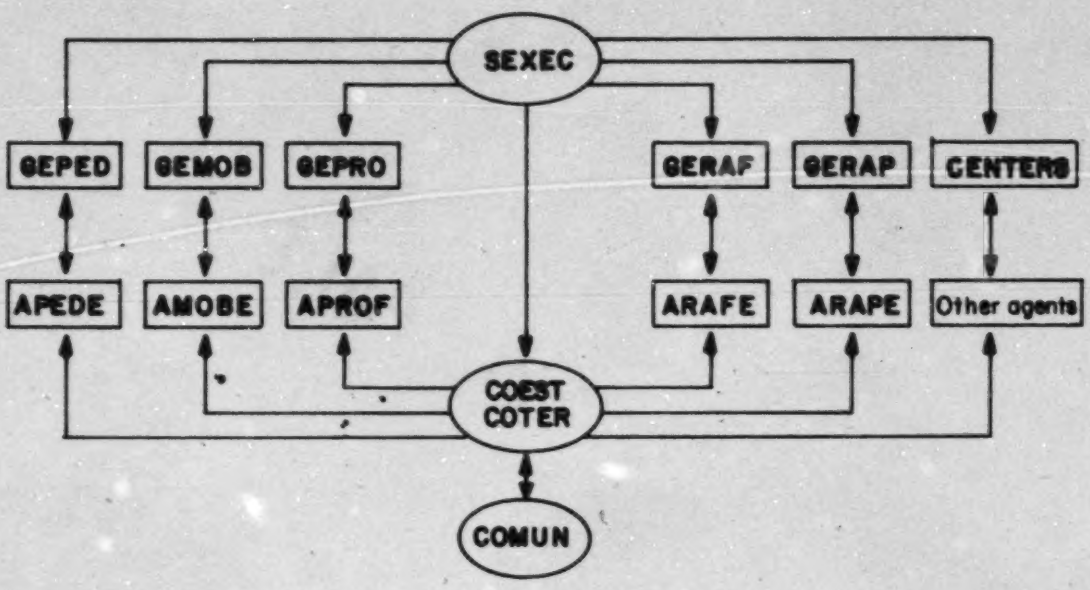
Actually, if the idea was to balance planning with specific case treatment, ASSOP would have to include members of Subsystems and of study and project committees. This definition would be all the more justified in view of the possibility that MOBRAL would open new areas of social activity.

Within the context of a single planning committee it seemed appropriate to transfer ASCON in order to counterbalance and supplement the staff plan of MOBRAL's Central Office. Thus a change was made from the means and ends approach to a planning and control approach.

In its formal aspect, the MOBRAL System would now be represented by an organizational chart and three flow charts laid out under a single norm as established by the normative policy. Figures 11, 12, 13 and 14 show these angles of the System, where the following aspects deserve comments:

(i) in the organizational chart, the general administrative sectors were simply divided into two categories: managements of MOBRAL's Central Office and Peripheral Units; actually, as they are all autonomous with regard to resources, and function as subsidiaries of MOBRAL's Central Office, the Coordinations, Regional Controls and Centers (Cultural and Training, Research and Documentation) could all be approached in the same manner;

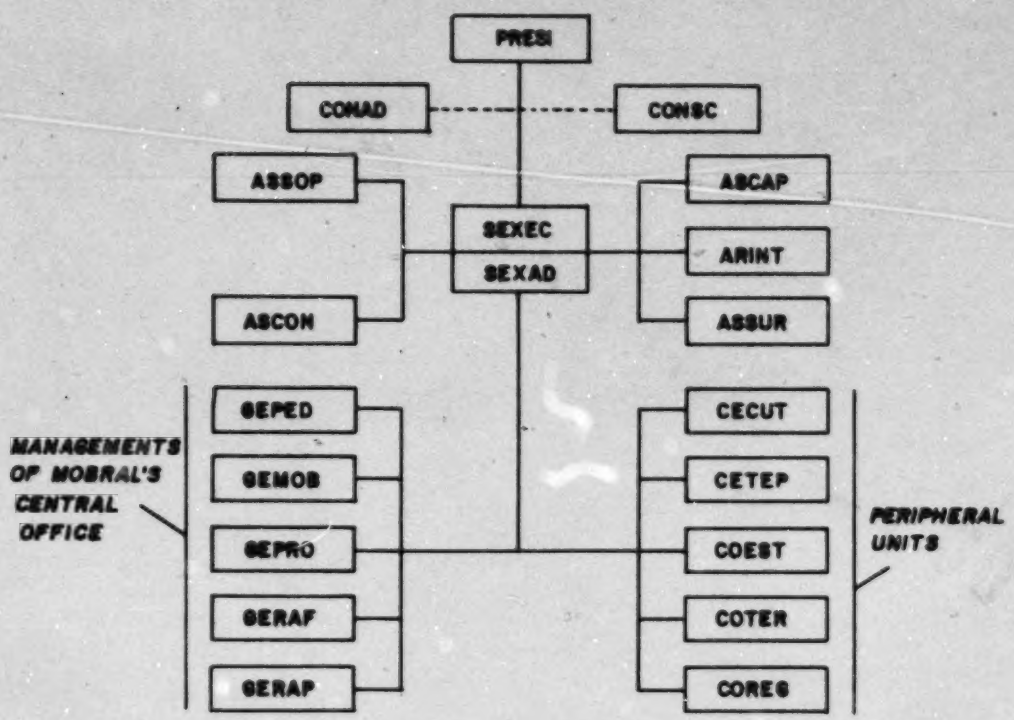
THE MOBRAL SYSTEM – STATE AND MUNICIPAL LEVELS



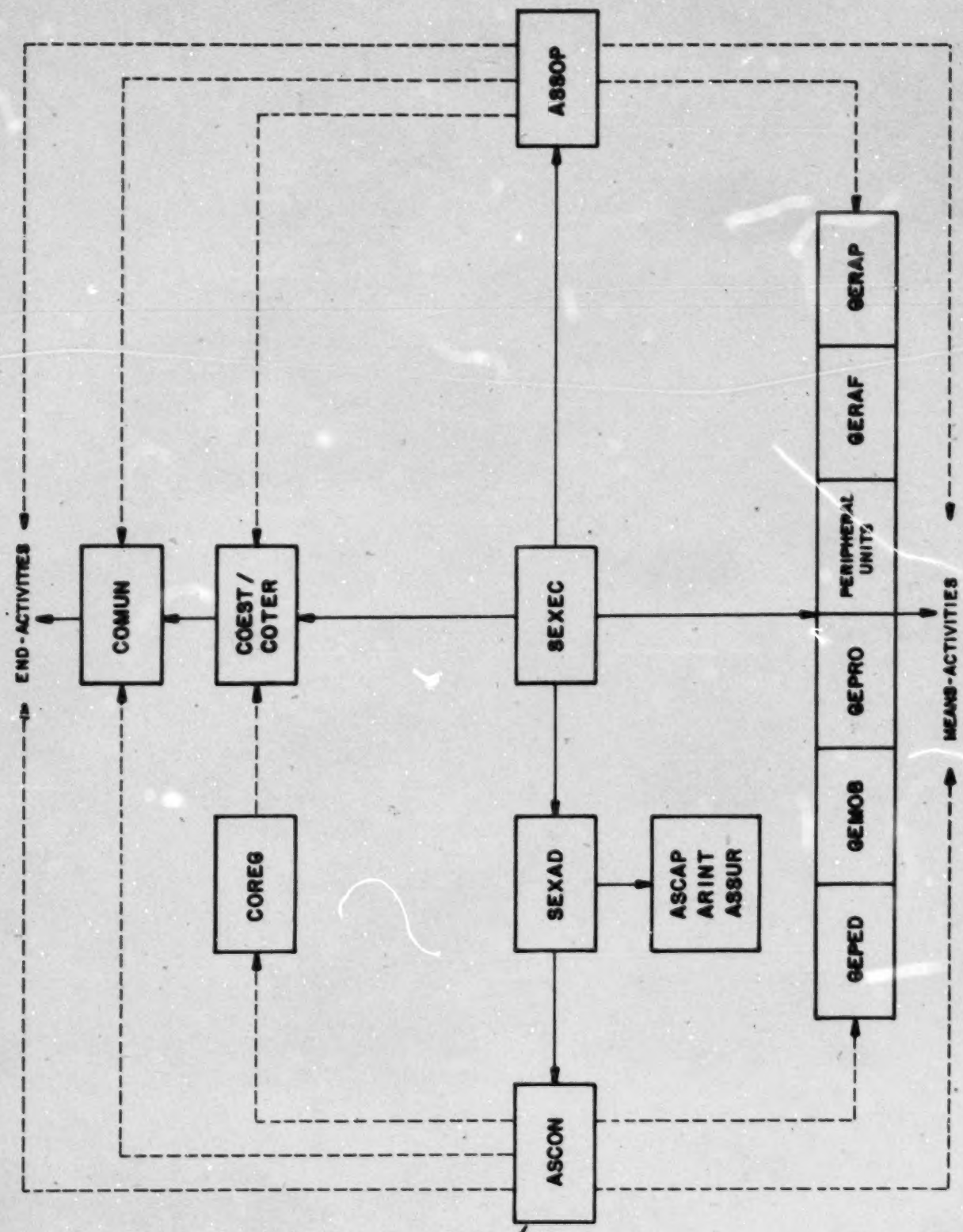
FLOW of decisions

FLOW OF NORMS, SUPERVISION AND CONTROL, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND STRATEGIC ORIENTATION.

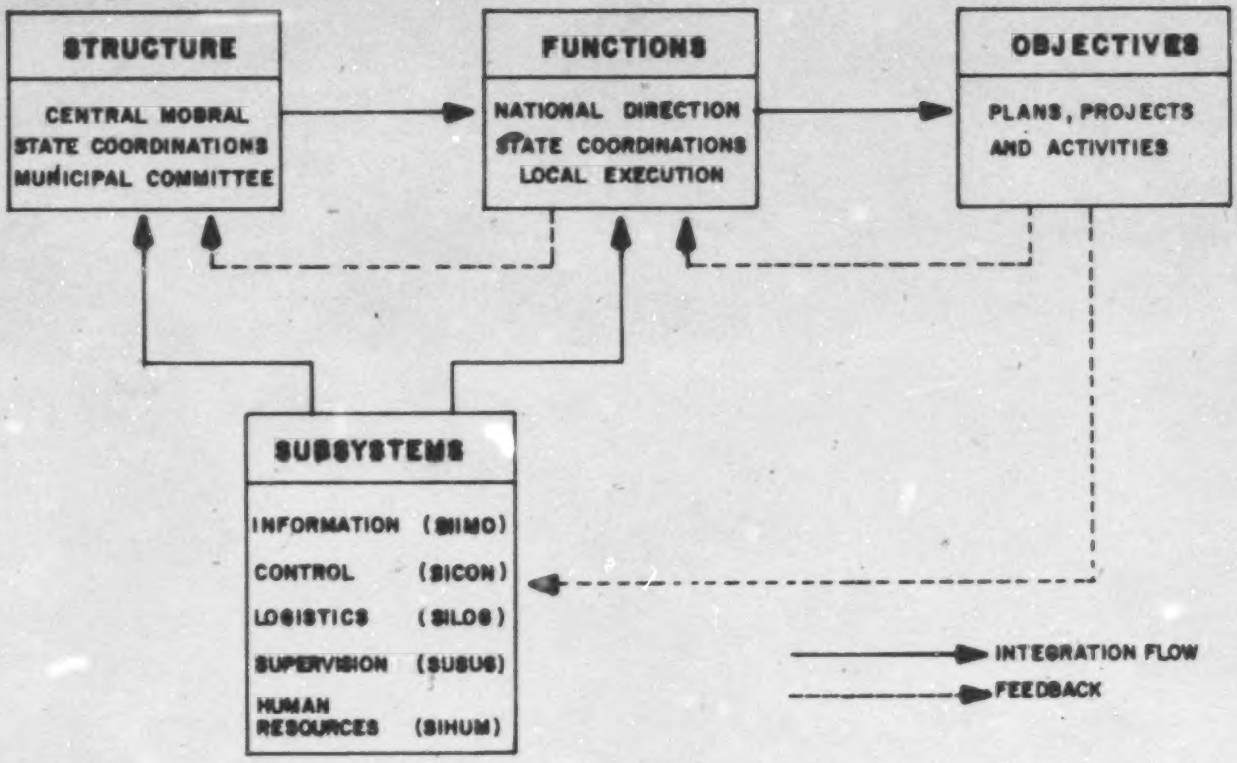
MOBRAL'S STRUCTURE



THE MOBRAL SYSTEM — NATIONAL LEVEL



THE MOBRAL SYSTEM – OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION



(ii) basic interrelationships have become "State and Municipal Levels", a term which expresses their actual meaning better; these included the GEPRO and its corresponding professionalization agent (APROF) as well as the Centers and their eventual State agents;

(iii) the coordination flow-chart became known as the "National Level", which is also a more meaningful term; here we have the SEXAD's new position which is possibly more functional, as it is superimposed on the SEXEC's former personal staff and on ASCON;

(iv) the integration flow-chart of the System was called "Operational Integration" and gained better communication through better definition of its structure, functions and objectives; in addition, the acronyms for the subsystems provide a uniform identification pattern for MOBRAL's departments.

The rigidity observed regarding the System's characteristics could be understood as a tendency to bureaucratization by the departments of MOBRAL's Central Office, especially those of the means-area. This phenomenon was explained as a defense mechanism for those departments faced with a complex and decentralized system, coupled with a loss of the drive observed during the pioneering phase.

Decadence, on the other hand, was manifest in the sprouting of pockets of resistance to the innovations brought about by SIIMO (information subsystem) and ASCON (control subsystem), both of which were increasingly considered "bureaucratic" in spite of preceding orientation and training sessions.

This organizational "conservatism" , especially on the part of the high-level personnel of MOBRAL's Central Office, brought out another facet of the "permanent reform" orientation adopted by the system. Its intense functional rhythm and the consequent speed of results obtained from trial and error proved that the balance between change and stability is extremely delicate: poorly introduced changes cause confusion, whereas poorly directed stability leads to stagnation.

The above conditions, always related to the evolution of organizations (Figure 1), left no doubt that, starting in 1974, the organizational strategy would have to be based on FLEXIBILITY, the very foundation for efficiency and maybe even for survival of the MOBRAL System.

From observations of the System's evolution during the period 1972/1974, some significant conclusions had to be drawn, which might lead to a better understanding of the intended flexibility.

The first conclusion is that it is normal, in systems structures, to have some overlap in the different evolutionary phases of the organization in different sectors at a given moment.

While some State Coordinations and departments of MOBRAL's Central Office showed unmistakable signs of decay, The Cultural Activities Center (CECUT) moved to the opposite end in its high achievement drive, implementing one thousand cultural centers in less than a year of activity. In this sense, there was a recurrence, in MOBRAL's organization, of phenomena known in business conglomerates.

Another routine occurrence in organizational systems is an overlap in the "timing" of different departments, although this tendency is sometimes considered lack of coordination.

A typical example within the MOBRAL System took place in the Research Sector of CETEP which, due to the nature of its activities, showed a slower work pace than the departments of MOBRAL's Central Office - its eventual users - resulting in problems of mutual understanding and managerial conflicts. SIIMO, on the other hand, was rapidly accumulating an increasing volume of data, while the demand for information was limited by the inability of other departments to assimilate it.

The same problem of different and overlapping "timing" may also be found with regard to functions. Contrary to FAYOL's concepts, in an organization that is structured in systems, functions do not complement each other. In MOBRAL's case, control was established after the planning was effected using specific criteria and work paces. Operational implementation of plans occurred under incidental conditions, depending on needs. Rejection of control by departments dealing with objectives would be due, not so much to inefficiency but rather to the fact that SOCIAL SYSTEMS WANT PLANNING BUT NOT CONTROL.

In our opinion, the catalysts for these different "timings" and phases would be the system's objectives. In MOBRAL this was evident in departments experiencing decay or excessive rigidity. For instance the Mobilization Management was not able to adjust to the rules established by the organization,

despite frequent changes in management, and therefore belonged to the class of decadent departments; as an example of excessive rigidity the CETEP's training sector was always known for its excessive individuality with regard to the organization's goals, resulting in repeated conflict situations.

As a further example for a better understanding of flexibility we could mention the multi-disciplinarian background of high-level personnel working at MOBRAL.

In 1973, the 61 professionals working at MOBRAL's Central Office had college degrees in the following areas:

PEDAGOGY	12	LIBRARY SCIENCE	2
ECONOMICS	6	ADMINISTRATION	2
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES	5	ACCOUNTING	2
MILITARY TRAINING	5	MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICS	2
ENGINEERING	4	GEOGRAPHY	1
LAW	4	COMMUNICATIONS	1
SOCIAL WORK	3	HISTORY	1
SOCIOLOGY	3	PHYSICAL EDUCATION	1
LITERATURE	3	NUTRITIONAL SCIENCE	1
LINGUISTICS	2	PLANNING	1

This diversity of professional training no doubt contributed to a healthy multi-disciplinarian outlook on all problems, and also made for flexibility of action in response to common objectives as the most feasible manner of operating within the System.

Another important observation refers to the flexibility naturally resulting from the optimal positioning of the Administrative Council, the Board of Trustees and the Presidency. In fact an organizational system functions like an orchestra and therefore needs a conductor whose presence is felt at the right moments. This focal decision point must not be curtailed in its freedom of action; in the MOBRAL System this has been true for the Executive Secretary.

Traditionally and according to the charter which created the MOBRAL Foundation, the role of the President and Consellors is only to outline the general policy to be followed by the organization: the Executive Secretary has complete operational liberty and the attending responsabilities.

Evidently the "Board" type of administration would be more democratic, perhaps more suitable in terms of public services; however it would certainly not provide the same flexibility, vitally necessary in an organizational system.

Obviously the risk of having a general administrator, such as an Executive Secretary, who is inefficient or does damage to his organization, is greater here than in the case of a board of directors; however the solution in this case would be to replace the person rather than to change the system. The presence of political reasons that make it impossible to replace that person would not imply that the problem lies in the structure and in the functioning of the organization. This position represents a consensus reached at MOBRAL during five years of intensive activities and might be one of the explanations for the organization's operational achievements.

In conclusion, some brief comments on MOBRAL as a "model" of organization and management for other institutions is in order.

Theoretically, closed systems (their structure, functions, norms etc..), are perfectly valid for any kind of large-scale organization involving complex activities.

In addition to modern multinational corporations there are organizations in Brazil, such as the FUNRURAL (social assistance organization for inhabitants of rural areas), the ABCAR (Brazilian Association for Rural Credit and Assistance) and the FUNABEM (Foundation for Assistance to Minors), which operate under similar criteria as MOBRAL with a reasonable degree of efficiency in operations involving rather complex aims.

In fact, these organizations were able to attain their objectives only by adopting decentralized and autonomous systems and, in many cases, by involving the local communities.

The rigid criteria of governmental bureaucracy lead to greater efficiency when combined with the flexibility, creativity and initiative of small operational units.

On the other hand, the conditions of open systems (individuals, groups, informal organization etc..) must not be indiscriminately generalized.

Each organization has its own "personality" which depends on the tradition, philosophy, objectives, selection and training of its members, the quality of leadership and, above all, on the socio-cultural environment in which they operate. Finally, the specific nature of these aspects does not allow us to do more than outline the means to a dynamic equilibrium with the variables of a closed system, without offering a basis for comparison and for references.

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